



All Soul's Night

A 2018 Ryuutama Halloween Scenario Spectacular contest entry

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Introduction

This scenario was created for the 2018 Ryuutama Halloween Scenario Spectacular contest. It should include everything you need to run a short Ryuutama journey (depending on how things go and how many events you include, it should take 1-2 sessions.) In this scenario, the PCs are people who have unfinished business with people who died in the last year, and will journey from their village in an attempt to see them one last time.

This scenario is intended for use with a Blue or Green Ryuujin, and will require some adaptation to work with Black. Red Ryuujin are probably not a good choice for this scenario.

This scenario contains a few additional rules, which can be implemented at the GM's option, which will hopefully improve play.

Inspiration:

This scenario draws upon the folklore and traditions surrounding the Celtic holiday of Samhain, one of the probable predecessors of modern Halloween. As a result, it presents some ideas and imagery which are familiar (costumes, Jack O'Lanterns) and others which may not be ('Halloween' as the last day of the year, bonfires). The original inspiration was Loreena McKennitt's Song "All Soul's Night" with a touch of Susan Cooper's The Grey King, but the final product has drifted some distance from those initial sparks.

Overview:

This scenario is technically a "gathering" scenario, where the PCs journey into the haunted hills on the last day of the year in order to wrap up "unfinished business" with someone who died during the year.

They will leave the village of Duvonn, and journey through the wilderness for several days to the Bald Tor. From there, the spectre known as The White Mare will lead them to the home of the Witch, Jenny Nettle, who knows the old secrets and will prepare the PCs for the last leg of their journey - up into the haunted hills - and for the ritual that will allow them speak with the dead without being torn from the world of the living.

Some of the Journey Checks in this scenario will be quite difficult for low level characters, and time constraints may prove challenging if Direction Checks are failed. The PCs may need to push on through nights, or receive help from their Ryuujin in the form of Benedictions of Reveils. If all the participants are new to Ryuutama, have the PCs leave Duvonn a day early, allowing ten days before All Souls' Night.

Some leeway is also afforded to the GM to add optional encounters to create a richer (but longer) experience.

New Rules:

Nighttime Travel

This scenario features a number of occasions when the PCs will have to travel by night. Normally under the rules, nighttime travel brings a +3 weather modifier. One of the themes of this scenario is the power of fire to purify and drive back the unnatural. As such, PCs who journey by night may use Torches and Lanterns as ‘traveling gear’ to receive bonuses on their Journey Checks when traveling after dark. Torches are consumed after one night’s travel, and cannot be used if the weather is windy or rainy. Lanterns may be used repeatedly, and have no weather restrictions. The spell Pure Crystalight has the same effect. The GM is encouraged to describe how the lights the PCs carry push back the darkness, but how it looms vast and seemingly endless beyond the reach of their torches.

Short Journeys

There are several places in this scenario where the PCs will need to travel a short distance, out and back. For these journeys, each character should roll only a single Travel Check. If it is successful, then no mishap befalls them on the trip. If it is unsuccessful, an odd total means that they run into trouble on the way to their destination, while an even total means trouble on the return trip. Similarly, the PCs should only make one Direction Check for the entire trip, with failure meaning it takes another day.

New Benediction

Memories of Those Who Are Lost

Up to two PCs who roleplay and express their relationship with the dead may increase their Spirit Score by one level for the rest of the session. (This Benediction can always be performed by spending life points, as if the Ryuujin had it assigned to a slot.) The GM may wish to inform the players that this Benediction is in play.

Reference:

Bold Text - is specific GM instructions, calling out actions to be taken.

Italic Text - is information to be conveyed to the players, and is intended to be suitable to be read aloud if desired.

The Beginning:

The last harvest has been gathered. The last straw bundled. The scarecrows stand vigil over empty fields. In nine days' time, the year will end, dying into winter. And on that day, the boundary between this world and the next will thin. This year's dead will journey into the hills, on the dark path to the World Beyond, and will vanish forever from this one.

Each of you has chosen to undertake a journey, to go to that dark place in the hills, to risk the perils of the dying of the year, far from the safety of your homes. You have unfinished business with the dead. What is it? What troubling feelings linger and drive you on?

Have the PCs should introduce themselves now, explain who they are, and their ostensible reason for making this journey. They do not need to explain everything, only what they might tell their companions. They do not need to be from the village of Duvonn, but can have journeyed here from other towns since this is the closest village to the haunted hills.

The PCs should make their initial Condition Checks at this time. If any Condition Checks are unusually high or low, ask the player why their character is feeling so good/bad.

The village of Duvonn is a small one, grown up around a swift, dark stream that now runs the mill. As tradition requires, the journey to the haunted hills begins at nightfall, as the last amber rays of the

setting sun glance down upon the town and then fade into the gloaming. A chill breeze blows, bringing with it the first promise of winter.

Carrying candles and lanterns, the folk of the village gather silently into two lines, flanking the village green, and forming a path for you to walk, northwards, towards the hills.

Everyone is quiet -- the reverence accorded those going on a journey from which they may never return -- but as you pass between the rows, some step forwards. Children deliver to each of you the roundest, reddest apples of the harvest, said to bring good luck. Then family members, near kin, or close friends step from the ranks for a few words. As they do so, each of you is given a small cloth bag of hazelnuts, gleaned from the woods nearby, and full of the wisdom of the earth.

Ask each player who gives them their bag of hazelnuts, and what they say when they do. The apple and the bag of hazelnuts are each Size 1.

Near the edge of the village stands the old stone church, the weathered stone dark in the twilight. By most reckonings, the church is a new building, but even so, it is still many years old. The Goddess' teachings do not condone 'heathen' traditions such as your journey, but still the aged Priestess stands in the doorway, a lantern pushing back the growing gloom as she beckons wordlessly to you.

The priestess will ask each of the travelers if they are set upon their path. Assuming they answer 'yes', she

will offer them each a pendant, a circle of iron, quartered by a 'cross' hanging from a simple leather thong. While the shape is the symbol of the Church, iron is part of the old ways, and is said to ward off evil. This item can be considered Size o.

"Travel north," she whispers, "to the Bald Tor. You will know it, for it looms over the hills on all sides, glowering down like a shaven skull. The only treeless hill for leagues around. If you spend the night there, someone will find you, and guide you on the next step of your journey. But remember. All Souls Night is but nine days away. You must reach the haunted hills by then."

These gifts from their village are not simply old superstitions -- each has some value:

- The apples do indeed grant luck. If one is eaten before making a check, that PC may roll twice and take the best result. (It takes a few minutes to eat the apple, so they're not much use in combat.)
- The hazelnuts don't look like enough food to be a ration, but will suffice nonetheless, and will give a traveler who eats them a one die-size boost to their Spirit for that day.
- The iron 'crosses' give 1 Defense Point against Undead and Demon type creatures -- whether from the power of the Goddess or the iron, who can say?

The First Night:

Leaving the Church behind you in the failing light, you cross the bridge over the stream, the water seeming black as it rushes along, and then... out of the village, with the lights of the houses flickering warmly behind you, as if imploring you to remain. You set forth into the dusk, across the empty fields, bare now, with crows roosting on the fences in the last light, the scarecrows ragged and forlorn.

It is only necessary to travel a short distance the first night -- a few hills from town, far enough to make it clear that you have departed the realms of men, but the journey is still dark and difficult. Travel and Direction Checks made this first night receive a +1 bonus due to the short distance traveled.

The PCs should make their first Travel and Direction Checks now. The Target Number is 9 (6 for the terrain, 3 for night) but due to the short journey this night, everyone receives a +1 bonus on both Checks, in addition to bonuses for torches or other gear.

If the Direction Check is failed (but not a fumble), the travelers can push on through the night to arrive at the same place, but will suffer the Sleepless Penalty to Condition (pg. 97). Otherwise, they will simply be behind in their journey and have less time to complete other tasks later.

After the travelers make their Camp Check for the night (This Check does NOT receive the +1 bonus for the short trip) some sort of nocturnal encounter will occur. These are intended to be harmless, but to build unease. You may roll or choose from the following list.

1. Snuffling -- A deep, ominous, wet snuffling sound, like the the breathing of a great beast, can be heard in the dark nearby, coming closer and closer. If anyone leaves the camp, the noise will immediately cease, and there will be no sign of anything to be found until the next morning, when a great footprint, like that of a giant dog, but with splayed, clawed toes can be seen. Hunters will know that this is not the print of any natural beast, and they, as well as any Minstrel or Noble, may roll [INT+INT;6] to recognize the print of The Black Dog, a legendary creature said to be a portent of death.
2. Scratching -- The party is awakened in the night by a deep, rending scratching noise from the darkness outside the camp. If anyone goes to investigate, they will catch a glimpse of something large, dark and bestial slinking away into the night... but it will have left deep, gouging claw marks in the trunk of an old oak tree.
3. Eyes -- Eyes, catlike and gleaming with a yellow green light, peer out of the foliage all around the party's campsite, sometimes blinking out and appearing somewhere else, sometimes gazing in baleful silence. If any of the PCs try to leave the camp or attack them, all the eyes go out. No sign of anything can be found in the morning.
4. Wings -- The rush of countless wings, flapping in the gloom, passes over the camp, taking several minutes to depart. And then a single set of vast, dark wings, gliding silently, moves across the crescent of the moon.

The First Part of the Journey:

The terrain for the first part of the journey is shown in the following table, along with the number of “days” of travel it will take to reach it. Some flavor text is also provided to aid in describing the environment. As the party covers ground, mark an X (for a normal day’s travel with successful Direction Check) or a / (if they failed a Direction Check, and have only proceeded half as far) in order to keep track of how far they have traveled.

Without mishap, it will take three days to reach the Bald Tor.

Depending on the planned number and lengths of sessions, the GM may wish to include some optional encounters as detailed in Appendix B: Additional Encounters. Alternatively, just embellish from the provided descriptions to create atmosphere as the party travels. Try to emphasize Autumn elements, such as falling leaves, shortening days, slanted sunshine, and long shadows.

For weather, consult the chart in Appendix A: Weather, and use it to track the passage of time.

Suggested Itinerary

<p>“Night 1” (Leaving the Village) Special: This leg of the journey is short, so all PCs receive +1 on Travel and Direction Checks.</p>	<p>Farmland/Grassland/Occasional trees (6) <i>Meadows and overgrown fields, with the occasional old tumbledown stone wall.</i></p>
<p>Day 1</p>	<p>Forest, low hills (8) <i>The trees are thickening, especially on the heights of the low, rolling hills; Old hardwoods are mixed with new growth, their leaves turned the colors of autumn.</i></p>
<p>Day 2</p>	<p>Thicker woods, small streams (8) <i>The forest is all around now, and the trunks loom large, though many leaves have fallen and the rest are red or brown or yellow. Leaves rustle underfoot, and carpets of acorns sometimes make footing awkward.</i></p>
<p>Day 3 Special: The Bald Tor can be seen looming above and ahead throughout the day. +1 on Direction Checks.</p>	<p>Woods, deep forest (10) <i>Deeper, darker woods, thick with shadow and the smell of ancient loam, punctuated by occasional clearings where a great tree has died, giving a view of the sky -- and the Bald Tor ahead.</i></p>
<p>Special Night (Occurs the first night after the PCs reach the Bald Tor) Special: No Direction Check is required</p>	<p>Deep forest (10) <i>Trees constantly looming up out of the dark, the moon and stars seeming to shed no light, branches clutching at you as you pass.</i></p>

The Witch's Cat:

On the night before the travelers would reach the Bald Tor, as they are making camp for the night, there will come a tremendous noise -- a hissing and yowling and thrashing amidst the leaves. Moments later, two grey, feline shapes -- one perhaps the size of a bobcat, at a meter or so long, and the other substantially larger, more than twice that size -- will come tumbling and scrambling into camp, possibly knocking over one of the PCs or a half assembled tent.

The larger creature will spring back, standing in the middle of the camp, bristling and hissing, fangs bared, both of its long tails lashing the air and its green eyes burning with hatred. It's a Demoncat (pg 184) and it's angry! Combat will ensue.

When the final blow is struck against the Demoncat, the other feline, which seemed to have dashed out of camp again, will leap in from the shadows, to give its own "killing blow" against the Demoncat, before settling nonchalantly down in the middle of the camp and starting to groom itself.

This is Grimalkin, the Witch Jenny's cat, an impossibly large grey feline, with one ear tattered from some past injury, and a number of cuts and scratches from his most recent altercation. He can talk, though he may take his time in deciding to do so, depending on how the travelers react. In his smug, feline fashion, he will not, precisely, thank them for rescuing him from the Demoncat, nor will he mention Jenny, or, really who he is.

However, he will guess (though he will, of course, pretend he just -knows-) that the travelers are going to the Bald Tor, and offer this advice:

"Don't be too afraid of the pale beast you might meet there. She has no malice in her heart -- it's as empty as her belly, and I wager she'd be oh-so-grateful for something to fill it."

Additionally, if there is a Healer in the party who performs Healing on Grimalkin, the cat will thank them politely, and walk about the camp, giving each traveler a lick with his rough tongue. Anyone so licked receives 1 Fumble Point.

Reaching the Bald Tor:

When the travelers have completed two days of travel (plus the first night) they will be able to see the Bald Tor looming ahead of them -- a hill rising steep from amidst its brethren, treeless, unlike all the others, but crowned with a number of great stones, now tumbled and in disarray, but still suggesting some ominous sort of purpose. On the final approach to the site, the Direction Check receives a +1 bonus, since the hill can often be seen looming ahead.

The top of the Bald Tor is not a welcoming place; Though the hill commands a view of the surrounding forest and the rising hills to the north, it feels very bare and vulnerable. Not even grass grows upon it, and the stones that were visible as you approached feel like a ruined wall that failed to defend whatever it was supposed to guard. What's more, the stones seem blackened, as if by fire. No birds can be heard calling, and the only sound is your own breathing and the murmur of the breeze in the trees below.

If the PCs have not struggled with Direction Checks or otherwise lost time (or if they have delayed an entire day), they will arrive at the Tor in the late afternoon, and will be able to receive the benefits of their Camp Check before the White Mare arrives to guide them to the Witch. Otherwise, feel free to have them make the Check, but no benefits will be gained since their rest will be interrupted.

The night is clear, the clouds running in

tatters before a racing wind, the sliver of moon seeming large in the sky and surrounded by countless stars. Somewhere in the distance, an owl hoots. You are exposed upon the Tor, the tumbledown stones that form the crown upon its bald head offering little shelter from the breeze.

The Priestess had said that someone would find you. But who, out in this forsaken place, and when?

And then there is movement at the base of the hill, near the edge of the forest that seems to dare not encroach upon it. A white shape, faintly luminous, vaguely man-shaped, with a flowing garment fluttering behind it on the wind. It begins to ascend, striding steadily up the incline, a pale gleam flashing from its eyes.

This is The White Mare, an emissary of the dead. As it draws nearer, it can be seen to be humanoid in shape, but skeletal, draped in a white shroud, with a horse's skull for a head. It bears no malice towards the travelers, but rather will guide them to the dwelling of the Witch, Jenny Nettle, if it is properly encouraged. The Mare will approach the travelers' camp, and stand, swaying as if in dance, upon the hilltop while giving a crooning sort of song. Minstrels and Nobles may roll Knowledge of Tradition/Refined Education against a Target Number of 7 to understand the gist of the song -- a rhyme sung in a very, very old version of the common speech, inflected strangely and using many words that must surely come from the language of the Old People. If rendered into common speech, it would be akin to:



*I have come
And ye must go
I am no beggar
But sure ye must know
Until I am fed
Ne'er will ye see
The path upon which
Ye shall journey with me.*

The Mare will repeat the song three times, and then, if nothing is offered, will sing it a fourth time, miming lifting something into its skeletal jaws and gnashing its teeth. It will repeat this twice more, and if not given a ration of food, will turn and glide away down the hill.

If the Mare is attacked, it will immediately collapse, the shroud drifting away like mist, while the skull and bones crumble rapidly to dust. It will return the next night, and each night thereafter that the travelers stay at the Tor, until All Souls' Night arrives.

If the Mare is fed, it will beckon the travelers to follow and lead them on the next stage of their journey, by night, to Jenny Nettle's house. No Direction Check is necessary on this journey, but Travel Checks must be made against a TN of 14 (Deep Forest, Windy, Night) If the Mare is fed either an apple or a bag of hazelnuts, it will take special care to lead the travelers by the safest path, granting +2 on their Travel Checks.

If the travelers attempt to follow the Mare without having fed it, they can follow it for some distance, and it will only be when the PC farthest in front sinks to their knees into muck that they realize that it has lead them into a mire, with the Mare walking easily across the surface of

the marsh, into which they sink all too easily. And to make matters worse, nine skeletons (Page 195) will pull themselves up out of the mire and attack! This will prevent the travelers from following the Mare, and they will need to return to the Tor and wait until the next night.

Jenny Nettle's House:

After a nightmarish journey through the dark forest, with only the pale glow of the spectral figure that ghosts on ahead to guide you, dawn begins to lighten the horizon, and the woods start to lose some of their more alien qualities. But as the sun rises, so too does your guide fade, disappearing as if its light can no longer be distinguished in the growing day. It is only then that you realize that you have reached... somewhere. A clearing in the depths of the wood, surrounding a squat dwelling, a cottage made of carefully stacked stones with a roof of turf, and no mortar save the moss that grows upon the rocks. Outside it, a smoky fire smolders beneath a tripod.

Give the players a few moments to react before...

And then the rickety door to the strange edifice swings open, and a woman strides through it; It's hard to guess her age, for her hair is done up tight in a bun, and her features are drawn and severe. Her black dress is simple and seems homespun, oft-mended, and sometimes stained. She frowns across at you, looking you up and down with a piercing intensity.

If all the PCs are in relatively good shape - none of them have fainted or

are below ¼ HP, Jenny will be businesslike right from the start:

“A sorry-looking lot ye all are. An’ like as not, looking for something Jenny knows that all ye lowlanders have forgotten. Well, let’s have yer names first, come on, speak up.”

Whereas if the PCs are clearly in a bad way, she will give them a chance to rest first:

After a long moment of regarding you, the woman shakes her head. “If it’s the dead ye seek, ye’re more than halfway to joining them for good. Let’s have yer names, but business can wait.”

There is a pine grove behind the Witch’s house, which offers good shelter from the elements, with a soft floor of dry needles. The party can rest here without needing to make a Camp Check, though they’ll need to provide their own food.

The Witch’s Tasks:

Once the party is feeling up to negotiating with her, Jenny can be found around the house anytime during the day, performing what look like ordinary household tasks writ large -- vast loads of laundry, carding impossible amounts of wool, making a cauldron full of what one hopes is soup, etc. Similarly, Grimalkin can sometimes be seen prowling through the area. However, since Jenny doesn’t yet trust the travelers, she will ask them to do some things for her to prove themselves. The number of tasks Jenny requires is up to the GM, depending on the desired number of sessions and how many days are left before All Souls Night.

Jenny will first warn the travelers that if they wish to meet the dead, they must reach the gate in the hills by All Souls Night, now just a few days away. And with that, she will give out at least one “individual” task, and may have travelers also work on tasks to prepare for the ritual, without telling them why. This is a good opportunity for the GM to either use up time, if there are several days left before All Souls Night, or move things along if there is not much time left. The PCs should be able to complete all the Witch’s tasks by the end of day 7.

These tasks are for the travelers to prove their worth:

Merchant

“Ye seem the sort that likes to wheel and deal. Fine, get ye on to my sister’s house an’ persuade her to return my pendant.”

Jenny’s sister, Agnes Thorn, has ‘borrowed’ her Serpent’s Tooth pendant. In fact, she believes it is hers -- neither witch truly remembers who it belongs to. Grimalkin, however, knows that it comes from their mother, and, more practically, that Agnes has a great weakness for hazelnuts. Grim can be persuaded to part with this information if the Merchant succeeds on a Negotiation Check [INT+SPI:7]. Agnes’ house is several hours away through the woods and hills, though the journey can be completed in one day if the Direction Check is successful; use the Short Journey rules for this trip.

Agnes is the elder sister, heavier set and more dour than Jenny, though their houses look much the same. She spends



most of her time brewing various vile concoctions in her cauldron, which is probably where she will be found. As Grimalkin knows, Agnes is passionately enamored of Hazelnuts, so offering her one of the bags in exchange for the pendant will get her to hand it over... unless she suspects that the travelers have MORE Hazelnuts, in which case she will negotiate furiously for more. She will also accept the hand mirror from the Burned Out House encounter, with a curiously misty look in her eyes. Otherwise, Agnes can be persuaded to accept a day's hard labor (will give the character [Exhaustion:8]) or some of the other special items found in this scenario such as the Black Dog's Pelt, or the dagger from the Bottomless Pit, etc. if the Merchant can succeed at a Negotiation Check [INT+SPI:8].

Minstrel

"Ye, Minstrel, ought to know that there are prices to be paid. Yers is to play me a song that will touch the heart of a stone." (Or similar, depending on the Minstrel's mode of performance)

Jenny will bring the Minstrel to a large stone in the woods not far from her home -- a great, mossy boulder, jutting up from the earth. "Here's yer audience. If ye can move -this- fellow to tears, then that will prove there is truth in yer heart."

In order to move the stone to 'tears,' the Minstrel must make a Music Check [DEX+SPI:9]. Success will cause lines of moisture to run down the stone's front. The Minstrel does not need to know a song suited to the terrain or weather, but each Check still costs 1 HP.

Hunter

"Hunting is a dangerous job, an' maybe ye are a dangerous sort. Well, we'll see which is more dangerous. Ye, or the Black Dog. Go, find its lair, an' bring me back its damned hide."

The Black Dog stalks the night as an emissary of Death, and those who see it are said to die in the next year... though in truth, only those wounded by the beast are so Marked, a fact of which Jenny is well aware.

The Hunter must pass a Tracking test against the topography (Deep Forest + Weather) to track the beast to its lair, and then lay in wait for it to emerge after dark so they can slay it (though they can of course have help). If they fail the Tracking test, the GM may either give them [Exhausted:6] and let them find the lair, or trigger an encounter from Appendix B and have them try again. Use the stats for the Hellhound (pg 183), but the Black Dog is Demon type, its eyes are glowing yellow, and it has only a faint, charnel aroma. After the beast is skinned, it will revive, bloody though it is, and bound off naked into the wood.

Once the skin is brought back to Jenny, she will make a Sturdy, Gross, Warm Cape from it and award it to the Hunter. This cape has the additional property of making the wearer invisible to the Dead and Undead. It will also function as a Guise for the Ritual (see below).

Healer

"I can tell someone who understands plants just by looking 'em in the eye. Be off, an' gather for me a bundle of nettles. Aye, the simple, common sort. Show me ye know the proper way to handle 'em."

Nettles grow in the darker, boggy parts of the forest, on the edges of streams and ponds; the Healer won't need to go far to find some, but to get a bundle that satisfies Jenny, they'll need quite a few. The Healer should make an Herb Gathering Check [STR + INT] against the topography (Deep Forest + Weather). A non-critical failure is enough to gather the nettles, but only on a success will they be able to do so without being afflicted with [Poison:6].

Jenny will use the nettles to make a surprisingly delicious stew that will give everyone +1 condition the next day.

Artisan

"And ye. Ye're handy with yer hands, an' don't deny it. I've got just the task for ye..."

Jenny needs the Artisan to show their skill at their craft in her service. Fortunately, she has a wide assortment of tasks that need to be done, depending on the Artisan's specialty, and she will provide any necessary tools or materials. The Artisan must succeed at a Repair Check [STR+DEX;9], with each attempt at fixing the item taking half a day. Example items for each type of Artisan include:

- Weapon -- Jenny has an old sickle with a blade that is blunt and rusted, the handle full of splinters.

- Armor or Shoes -- Jenny has a pair of great, heavy hobnailed boots made of some absurdly thick leather. The soles are worn near away and coming off, the leather is cracked, and the lace holes need reinforcing. They are also caked with mud and who knows what else.
- Cape -- Jenny has a vile, thick cape, woven of some sort of undyed wool; it is threadbare and full of burrs, and all the hems are coming undone.
- Stave -- Jenny has an old cane -- which she doesn't seem to need, for her posture is excellent and she walks steadily. The handle is broken, the shaft splintered, and the spike on the end bent.
- Hat -- Jenny's second-best hat has been stove in, the brim has come almost entirely off, and whatever passed for a liner has long since been torn out.
- Accessory -- Jenny has an enormous, gaudy brass ring set with a cat's-eye agate about the size and shape of a person's eye. The stone is loose -- threatening to fall out of its setting at any moment -- and the band is nearly worn through.
- Food -- Jenny's storehouse contains a great number of aged, often rotting root vegetables, wilted herbs, wrinkled apples, and questionable meats. The cook must produce a meal fit for such hardy travelers.

- Sundry -- Jenny has an old pipe, gummed with tar, charred and blackened, the mouthpiece scarcely recognizable and the stem starting to split.
- Camping Equipment -- Jenny has a macabre-looking stuffed bear with one eye missing, half its stuffing torn out, and its limbs hanging on by mere threads. It also has a surly expression, but she doesn't want that fixed.
- Container -- The footlocker that contains Jenny's clothes is all but shattered. The hinges give a mighty screech whenever it is opened, the latch no longer latches, and the bottom is stove in.

Farmer

"Ye look like a right child of soil. So, I need ye to sow these teeth in my garden. Aye, teeth, what's it to ye?"

Jenny's garden is monstrously overgrown and full of weeds, nettles, briars, and stones. One might as well try to 'weed' a patch of the forest floor. But that's what the Witch wants. That and sowing what look like fangs from some fierce carnivore of tremendous size into the soil. The Farmer will need to pass a [STR + DEX:8] Check, to weed and plant the teeth. Failure makes the task take an entire day instead of half a day, and inflicts [Exhausted:6]

Noble

"Ye seem to be one who studies books. Let us see how learn'd ye are!"

Jenny will ask the Noble three riddles. Four are provided for variety. Let all the players collaborate on solving them, even though this is a challenge for the Noble character alone.

1. What can you do with your mind, and have in your heart; what makes music in your purse, and is not the same from the start? (change)
2. Young I am tall; old I am short. I love to glow, but breath is my foe (candle)
3. This old one runs forever, but never moves at all. He has no lungs, nor a throat, But you can hear his mighty roaring call. (waterfall)
4. I die once a year, yet time makes me stronger. I bear rings not of gold, but marks of age. I have no bite, yet I bark. (tree)

There is no time limit to answer the riddles, nor will Jenny hold wrong answers against the character, but she will not help the travelers until the task is complete.

Optional: If the players are stuck on a riddle, allow the Noble character to make an [INT+INT:6] Check, after sleeping, to wake up with the solution in mind.

Preparing for the Ritual:

Once the PCs have earned Jenny's trust, she will instruct them in the things they need to do to approach the Dead safely. They must:

Gather Blackwood for a bonfire

Thorny Blackwood can be found growing in great quantity in a marsh between two hills not far from Jenny's house, but it is a tough, fibrous, and yes, thorny plant that grows in squat, dense thickets. Jenny can provide saws and tools (though not without some complaining), but it still won't be easy. The travelers will need to journey to the marsh, cut 12 Size worth of Blackwood, and return with it to Jenny's house. Use the Short Journey rules for this trip.

Once they reach the swamp, it will be easy enough to find stands of Blackwood -- it's easily recognizable from its dark bark and long thorns -- but the same thorns that make it easy to identify make it hard to cut safely, since the inch-long spikes must be trimmed away. Each person cutting Blackwood should make a [DEX+STR:7] Check. On success, they cut Blackwood equal to the difference between their Check Total and the target number (minimum 1). Failure inflicts [Injury:6] as the thorns take their toll. Each attempt takes one hour, and the party needs 12 Size worth of Blackwood for the bonfire. The journey from Jenny's House takes four hours each way, so if the travelers spend more than three hours harvesting, they will have to make their return trip in the dark.

Ensure that they each can carry a covered flame

Jenny will inform the travelers that they will each need to carry with them a part of their bonfire -- no magical light will be sufficient, and torches risk being blown out, dooming the bearer. Anyone who doesn't have a lantern will need to make one from a pumpkin gathered from the wild patch Jenny knows of. The pumpkin patch is, however, guarded by a Pumpkin Plantimal (pg 188) which has woven itself throughout the pumpkins, and must be defeated in order to have any peace in which to harvest them. (Jenny knows this, but won't mention it unless the travelers ask about possible dangers.)

Once the pumpkins are gathered, it will take a few hours to carve them. Have each player describe how their character's Jack O'lantern making went, and how it looks. The whole process of going to the pumpkin patch, gathering pumpkins, returning, and carving them will use up a day.

Each have a 'guise'

a concealing cloak or other outer garment. Any sort of Cape, worn inside out will do, as will the Black Dog's Hide. If anyone lacks an appropriate guise, Jenny will ask for Spider's Silk to weave them for those who lack.

There are often giant orb-spiders to be found in the woods, as described in Encounter 10. Each pair of spiders has enough silk in their webs for Jenny to make two cloaks. If the travelers go looking for spiders, it takes 1d4 hours to stumble into them, but a Hunter who

successfully passes an Animal Tracking check, TN 8, can find them in an hour... and prevent the party from being surprised.

The capes Jenny weaves (in surprisingly little time) are Beautiful, Sturdy, Windbreakers.

The Steps of the Ritual:

Once the PCs have completed all the preparations, Jenny will tell them what they need to do in order to meet up with the Dead. She stands straighter, and her severe face loses some of its hardness as she speaks. In a formal, almost rehearsed voice, devoid of her usual accent:

“Hear me now and listen well, for your very souls depend on heeding my instructions. First, you must find one of the bonfire glades, and there build your fire out of Blackwood... but do not set flame to it before the last edge of the sun has fallen beneath the horizon. Then kindle the fire, and let it burn hot and bright. When it is truly dark - the sort of dark that comes with the failing of the year - then steel yourselves and leap through the flames. That will burn away the scent of life from you. Then gather ashes from the fire and rub them upon your faces, so that the dead will not know you. Then put on your guises, light your lamps from the pure fire, and follow the standing stones up into the hills, to the gate. Once the dead have passed, walk widdershins through the gate and it will see you safely home.”

In order to safely see the Dead on their final journey, the PCs will need to:

- Make a bonfire of Blackwood
- Each leap through the flames
- Gather some ashes and rub them on their faces
- Put on their guises
- Carry a flame from the bonfire up into the hills

If any of these steps are omitted, the GM may impose whatever consequences they like (ideally after the PCs have seen and spoken to the Dead they came to see), or the Ryuujin may intervene.





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Travel to the Hallowed Place:

In order to reach the place in the haunted hills where the Dead will walk, the travelers must leave Jenny's house and venture up into the hills on a journey that will take at least two days. The travelers **MUST** arrive before All Souls Night (the night after Day 9), or they will have missed their chance, and the Dead will pass on to the next world forever. The GM may add optional encounters from Appendix B now if the PCs are ahead of schedule or to add additional time pressure.

At the end of the second leg of the journey, the travelers will come upon a meadow near some light woods -- a Bonfire Glade.

The breeze hisses softly through the grass, and in the fading light, you can see, not far from the line of slender, leafless trees, a great, blackened spot, where no plants grow, and old, charred wood lies, damp and forlorn. This must be one of the bonfire glades the Witch spoke of.

All Souls Night:

At this point, turn over control to the PCs -- it's up to them to follow the steps of the ritual. No Checks are required for any of the steps, but rather, just describe heavily. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- The bonfire burns eagerly, hot and bright, but the night closes in around, a vast, darkness that seems to stretch out forever.
- The crescent moon and twinkling stars are high and remote, the only points of light in the entire world outside the glow of the fire.
- The sound of an owl can be heard from outside the light of the fire (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHJZnvYtruM>).
- The flames lick about each person as they leap through them, leaving an acrid taste on the tongue, and a dry, smoky feeling on the face and exposed skin.
- The ashes are still warm, and coat your faces easily, making you each look strange and wild, your eyes showing very white in the firelight.

Suggested Itinerary

Day 1	Deep forest, woods (10) <i>The dark forest near the Witch's house thins as you climb, following small streams and the slope of the land upwards. Trees become shorter and thinner, often leafless as you climb.</i>
Day 2	Woods, highlands (8) <i>The forest opens into wide, windswept highlands with tall, rustling grasses and late-blooming wildflowers, already starting to go to seed.</i>

- Shifting your capes lets the chill wind in to thrill down your spine, and donning them again, reversed, increases the sense of Other and Strangeness.
- The embers taken from the fire leap and dance gleefully in your lanterns, casting leaping shadows of your party, the trees, and sometimes other things, as if strangers walked among your company.
- A long path, marked by tapered standing stones - no more than waist high - leads up into the dark of the hills.

When the travelers follow the path up into the hills, they will begin to see things. Half glimpsed shapes and shadowy figures walking nearby, or flickering just at the edge of their lantern light. They will hear soft murmurs, like voices in the distance, and a smell like frost will fill the air. Climbing higher, the path will come to a small open space, where other paths lead in from other places in the hills, and where a great stone gateway -- two monstrous uprights with a great, heavy stone lintel above -- looms in the flickering lantern light. And the shadows of the dead, flickering and half seen, begin to gather, paying no heed to the travelers.

Moments afterwards, a great horn call -- from an oxhorn, or the like, not some brassy trumpet -- will boom out, resounding hollow from the hills about. And from one path, there comes the sound of hooves, a skeletal horse approaching, bearing a rider with an antlered helm, his armor glinting green in

the lantern light. The iron crosses the travelers wear will begin to grow warm.

The skeletal horse walks slowly up to stand beside the gate, and then the rider lifts from his saddlebow a branch, long and heavy with shining green leaves and red berries. With it, he gestures to the gate, and the Dead begin to approach, forming a long, single line that trails off into the shadows, slowly proceeding past the figure on the horse, beneath the upraised branch, and through the gate, never to emerge again.

At this point, ask the PCs what they do, who they see in the crowd, and how they react. The Dead will not recognize the PCs or react to them in any way unless the PCs either remove their guises or speak directly to someone they knew. It is up to the GM whether the fate of any of the Dead can be changed, or what will happen to any PCs who cast aside too many of their protections.

Nothing in this place can be fought or killed.

Once the PCs have spoken to all the Dead they wish to see, the long, grey procession continues, until at last the figure on the horse turns, and guides his steed through the portal as well, vanishing in the process. It is nearly dawn.

From here, you may play out the return journey, or the travelers may be whisked safely back home by walking widdershins (counterclockwise) through the gateway.

The End.





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Appendix A: Weather

This table provides weather for each day of the scenario (and then some, just in case) as well as a means of tracking time. Place an 'X' in the first column each day.

	"Night 1" (Leaving the Village)	Clear Skies, Night (+3) <i>A waning crescent moon, a cool breeze that rustles the grass.</i>
	Day 1	Cold, Clear (+1) <i>A brisk autumn chill that numbs the tips of the ears</i>
	Day 2	Cold, Clear, Windy (+2) <i>A chill wind down out of the hills that slips through any gap in clothing to chill the heart.</i>
	Day 3	Cloudy Skies (+0) <i>A low, ominous bank of clouds through which the sun cannot pierce.</i>
	Special Night (Occurs the first night after the PCs reach the Bald Tor)	Clear, Windy, Night (+4) <i>The moon and stars are unable to reach through the trees, the wind driving the branches to wild motion, with tattered clouds showing whenever you glimpse the sky.</i>
	Day 4	Cloudy Skies, Windy (+1) <i>The wind cannot break the clouds above, and they rush by heavily as your clothing is pulled by the wild gusts.</i>

	Day 5	Rain, Windy (+2) <i>A sad, misty drizzle that seems to shape itself into wraiths and phantoms as the wind whips it into your faces.</i>
	Day 6	Cloudy, Windy (+1) <i>The wind gusts fitfully, but the air is already dry, the clouds racing fast across the sky and breaking by evening.</i>
	Day 7	Clear, Cold (+1) <i>A pure, sunlit day, the air dry and sharp with the scent of the upcoming winter.</i>
	Day 8	Clear, Cold, Windy (+2) <i>High, thin clouds seem untouched by the icy wind that races along, rustling branches and fallen leaves.</i>
	Day 9	Clear, Cold, Windy (+2) <i>A beautiful autumn day, with an impossibly blue sky, and a wild breeze that kicks up the leaves and accentuates the frosty chill.</i>
	Day 10	Cloudy, Windy (+1)
	Day 11	Rain (+1)

Appendix B: Additional Encounters

These encounters represent additional things that can happen to the travelers along the way; The GM is free to use as many or as few of them as they like -- if the goal is to get the entire scenario done in a single session, then omitting all the additional encounters is the right course. On the other hand, if you find the PCs flying through the adventure, or simply want a longer play experience, you can add these on the fly as needed.

Some of the events are more interesting with certain classes present. If this is the case, they are noted in parentheses.

Daytime encounters:

Standing Stone (Minstrel)

A single upright length of weathered, grey stone juts up from the earth like a pointing finger, and trickles of sticky, dark liquid run from pockmark like dents in the sides. No vegetation grows within approximately ten meters of it on any side, save only for coarse, uneven grass. The air around the stone is chilly, and if the weather is cold, there is frost in its shadow.

Minstrel: A successful Check of Knowledge of Tradition [Int+Int:6] will recall that this is an artifact of the Old People who dwelt in these lands long ago. They put up standing stones at places of Power. TN 8 will recall that this particular stone is said to be set at the site of an old battle between warring chiefs, and that the stone has absorbed the blood

from the battle.

Magic Spells cast here receive +1 on the Magic Check and cost half as much MP, but inflict Muddled 6 on the caster.

Bottomless Pit (Minstrel)

A small hole in the earth, perhaps a meter across, or less, but seeming to descend deep into the ground... further than the light reaches, though one can faintly glimpse flickering down in the depths, as if light were glinting on dark water. From time to time, a faint sound, like a moan, can be heard echoing from the depths.

Descending into the pit will reveal it to be deeper than a single rope will reach, and the first person descending will be attacked by a skeleton that tears itself from the earthen wall of the pit, clawing, biting and stabbing with an ancient but well preserved dagger (See Skeleton, page 195.) If the skeleton is defeated, it clings to the dagger, which is a High Quality, Cursed Dagger (Light Blade) in the style made by the Old People.

Further down, the pit grows hot and humid, the walls damp and muddy, and at the very bottom, it plunges into dark, slimy water with no seeming bottom.

Minstrel: A Successful roll of Knowledge of Tradition [Int+Int:6] will recall the story of Olen's Folly; A man who became convinced that there was a treasure buried in the hills, so he dug and dug and dug until he couldn't escape from the pit he made...

Disturbed Grave (Noble)

What was once clearly a carefully laid grave, with a granite marker and an outline of smaller stones to demarcate it, as well as what once might have been spears planted ceremonially at the corners. It has been disturbed, however, and by the look of it, by man, not beast, for the earth removed was piled in a heap to one side. The work must have been done some time ago, for weeds have had a chance to grow upon the discarded soil... though not upon the grave itself. The grave marker is crudely carved with the insignia of the Laegen house, a noble family that dwelt in these hills long ago -- easily recognizable to a Noble character.

Searching the area and succeeding on a [DEX+INT:7] Check will reveal some human bones scattered around the area, as well as the mark of a guild of treasure hunters carved into a nearby tree. A Noble or Minstrel can recognize the mark by making a successful [INT+INT:4] Check.

Burned Out House (Merchant)

The remains of a small freestanding cottage or homesteading, now burned and overgrown, with only one corner, the chimney, and part of the roof still standing. There is something both sad and angry about the place.

Camping here will grant +1 on the camp Check, but strange, haunting dreams of fire and angry folk will prevent the recovery of more than 1 MP.

Some possible dreams the party members may have:

- Unending, bone weary tasks and chores about the house, scrubbing floors, cleaning dishes, and the like under the eye of harsh voiced old woman whose face you cannot remember.
- Hiding inside a house as flames lick up around the walls and floor, running through halls and rooms that seem unfamiliar and maze-like as the smoke and flames seem always about to engulf you.
- A young girl lies in bed before you, crying out in her fever as you desperately try strange medicine after medicine to try to help her.
- A mob of angry people, carrying pitchforks and torches chases you through a neverending forest.

This was once the home of the witch sisters, Jenny and Agatha, but it was burned by mistrustful village folk, and they fled deeper into the hills. A thorough search of the house will reveal a pile of hazelnut shells in one corner, and a bone handled hand mirror.

The Bog (Healer)

Down in a valley between two hills, the ground has become soft and boggy, and there is a scent of decay. The ground becomes slippery and the footing treacherous, as if something were pulling you down into the dark between the hills. While the terrain is mucky and difficult, it wouldn't be dangerous were it not for the prolific blooms of Viper's Eye Flower, a poisonous weed with a flower that sports orange and yellow petals around a black, oval center. These flowers and this bog have claimed many lives over the years, including the treasure hunter who disturbed the grave in encounter 3. His remains can be clearly seen amidst the flowers - white bone and shining metal.

Going around the bog takes some time, but not enough to seriously disrupt the journey, while passing through the bog risks exposure to the poisonous plants. If the travelers do opt to struggle across the muck, anyone without a pair of mud boots loses HP equal to the difference between the result of a [STR+DEX:4] Check.

Crossing the bog allows the travelers opportunity to investigate the skeleton and its gear lying amidst the colorful flowers. The bones are half sunk in the mud, with a rotted pack lying nearby, but it's hard to see and impossible to approach without dealing with the flowers, which inflict [Poison:6] on anyone who touches them.

A Healer can create a temporary antidote to the flowers' poison from the flowers themselves and some of the other bog plants by succeeding on an [INT+SPI:7]

Check. Non-Critical failure still creates the antidote, but gives the Healer [Poison:6]

The skeleton has the following belongings:

- A broken, beautiful, high quality sword -- little more than a well crafted but very tarnished silver inlaid hilt with a bit of rusted blade. The hilt bears the insignia of the Laegen house, because it was taken from the grave in Encounter 3 and is being sought by the ghost in night encounter 1.
- A pair of mud boots, still in good repair since they are intended to survive wet conditions.
- A rotted pouch containing 200g (moving it spills the coins on the ground)
- A broken lantern
- A pair of goggles

Slaughtered Deer (Hunter)

The first sign of something unusual is the buzzing of flies, then a strange, metallic scent. And then, sprawled across the travelers' path, is the corpse of a deer with its throat torn out, blood soaking the ground, and flies buzzing everywhere. The wound is clearly from some sort of large beast, but what kind of animal would kill and then leave the prey to rot?

A careful search of the area in the form a [DEX+INT:4] Check will reveal one of the Black Dog's footprints, as per the snuffing encounter from the first night.

Circle of Dolls (Artisan)

A small clearing in the wood, with corn-husk dolls hanging from the branches around the edges. The dolls are not old -- corn husks don't last long when left out in the elements -- but there's no sign of any human habitation or activity anywhere nearby. What's more, the dolls seem to move and shift position when no one is looking at them.

If the party spends more than a few minutes in the clearing, they will hear a child's laughter, and a haunting voice saying "Play with us, play with us!"; If an Artisan makes a Crafting Check [STR+DEX:4], they can make a toy or accessory for the dolls, which will please the Spirits. The next time the travelers

camp, in the morning they will find a Corn Husk Cape on the ground, and hear the soft laughter of children receding. The cape is a High Quality Raincoat.

Spider Nest

The first sign of something amiss is a tugging on someone's arm, as if something were stuck to it. Moments later, two Giant Orb Spiders will descend from the trees and attempt to capture the PCs. Since this attack comes by surprise, all the PCs start in the Front Area.

The webs of these spiders might be useful later...

Giant Orb Spider

Habitat: Woods, Deep Forest	Level 4
Season: Fall	Materials: Web (100g)
HP: 19	Abilities: 8, 8, 2, 4
MP: 8	Accuracy: d8, d8
Initiative: 7	Damage: d8
Condition: 4	Armor: 1
<i>Giant, web dwelling spiders with poisonous bites, Giant Orb Spiders are also known for the strength of their webs, which can ensnare travelers, but which can have a certain amount of value to a craftsman as well.</i>	
Special: Webs. Any character who tries to move between areas must make a [DEX+INT:6] Test or be unable to do so this round.	
Special: Venomous Bite. When a character is damaged by a Giant Orb Spider attack, they receive [Poison:2]. Each subsequent time they are stung, the poison level increases by 2 to a maximum of 8.	

Nighttime encounters:

In addition to any of the First Night encounters that have not yet already occurred:

Ghost Sighting

A spectral figure can be seen moving through the darkness, some ways out from camp. She is the lady knight whose disturbed grave is described in encounter 3, above. She is seeking the sword that was entrusted to her by her Liege Lord; it was stolen by grave robbers, and she cannot rest until it is returned. The sword -- or what remains of it -- can be found in The Bog in encounter 5, above.

If any party members have a sword, the Knight will approach them, her ghostly voice echoing, "Return it... return it! It must be brought back!" but she is not coherent enough to have a conversation. Attempting to give her any other sword will cause her to reach out to try to grasp it, only for it to fall through her ghostly fingers. If the party has already found the broken sword in The Bog, she will behave similarly, but will grasp the hilt of the shattered blade and hold it up in salute -- the weapon looking whole and shining in her hands. "I am forever in your debt, but my time here is short. I shall guard your rest tonight." That night's Camp Check becomes a Critical.

Howling Beast

A bone chilling howl silences all the ordinary sounds of night, and waking all sleepers. Everyone can tell it's no ordinary wolf.

The Bonfire

At midnight, a sudden flame leaps up one hill away from the travelers' camp site. What appears, from its size in the darkness, to be a roaring bonfire, with strange, eerie looking figures capering about it. The remains of the fire can be found after sunup but doing so will take the travelers half a day out of their way. The glade in which the fire was set is marked with catlike footprints.

Bottomless Pit

This may also be used as a nighttime encounter, where the moaning that the pit emits alerts the PCs to its presence. Spending the night near the pit will give all the PCs [Exhaustion: 4] as the sound fills their sleep with uneasy dreams. Otherwise, see the Bottomless Pit daytime event, above.